

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 624

INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SL

SUBJECT: BOMB PLOT COURT MARTIAL OPENS

REF: FREETOWN 2278

1. COURT MARTIAL OF NINE ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS OF SIERRA LEONE MILITARY FORCES ALLEGED INVOLVED IN JULY 1974 BOMBING PLOT OPENED FREETOWN JANUARY 7. DEFENDANTS ARE TWO WARRANT OFFICERS AND SEVEN NCO'S AND ENLISTED MEN MOST OF WHOSE NAMES FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN TESTIMONY DURING TREASON TRIAL OF MOHAMED SORIE FORNA AND 14 OTHERS WHO CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO DEATH LAST NOVEMBER (REFTEL) AND WHOSE CASES NOW ON APPEAL. COURT MARTIAL IS COMPOSED OF FIVE ARMY OFFICERS WITH PROMINENT CIVILIAN ATTORNEY JOHN SMYTHE SERVING AS JUDGE ADVOCATE. PROSECUTION BEING LED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL BUCK AND ACCUSED BEING DEFENDED BY PROMINENT CIVILIAN ATTORNEYS.

2. DEFENDANTS ARE CHARGED WITH TWO COUNTS OF TREASON, SPECIFICALLY 1) CONSPIRING TO OVERTHROW AND 2) ENDEAVORING TO OVERTHROW GOSL. ALL HAVE PLEADED NOT GUILTY.

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3. COURT MARTIAL, WHICH BEING HELD IN PUBLIC, HAS GOTTEN

OFF TO SLOW START. ACCORDING OBSERVERS, NO SIGNIFICANT
TESTIMONY TO DATE. PUBLIC ATTENTION SO FAR APPEARS MINIMAL.
FROM ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE IT APPEARS COURT MARTIAL WILL
OBSERVE ALL LEGAL NICETIES. EMBASSY RELIABLY INFORMED THAT
SMYTHE, WHO DID NOT WANT THE TASK AND INTIALLY DECLINED
GOVERNMENT REQUEST HE SERVE AS JUDGE ADVOCATE, FINALLY
CONSENTED ON CONDITION DEFENDANTS COULD HAVE CIVILIAN COUNSEL
AND THAT ALL LEGAL SAFEGUARDS WOULD BE RIGOROUSLY OBSERVED.
SULLIVAN

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